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Pearson Education Australia
Unit 4, Level 3
14 Aquatic Drive
Frenchs Forest NSW 2086

www.pearsoned.com.au

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Cover photograph from Wildlight.com
Typeset by Midland Typesetters, Australia

Printed in Malaysia (CTP - PA)

1 2 3 4 5 13 12 11 10 09

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Author: Brady, Laurie
Title: Celebrating student achievement: assessment and reporting
/Laurie Brady; Kerry Kennedy.
Edition: 3rd ed.
ISBN: 9781442507104 (pbk)
Notes: Includes index.
Subjects: Educational tests and measurements.
Educational evaluation.
Other Authors/Contributors: Kennedy, Kerry.
Dewey Number: 371.26

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The multiple contexts influencing assessment and reporting

Assessment is a pervasive activity in society and can take a variety of forms. It can be carried out by professionals such as teachers, doctors, human resources consultants, psychologists, weather forecasters, wine tasters and music critics. Assessment requires professionals to make a judgment: it might be a judgment a doctor makes about a patient's illness, having reviewed all the evidence, or an art critic's judgment about a new work of art. The purpose of these judgments, irrespective of context, is to provide an assessment—of the patient or the work of art. Such an assessment informs different audiences—the patient, the patient's family, or art lovers and artists. It can also provide the basis for further action, such as prescribing appropriate health care or identifying similar characteristics in other works of art. Professional judgments are made all the time across a great range of activities.

Assessment is not only the province of professionals; it is also an everyday activity. We make judgments about the quality of service we receive, the food we eat and the books we read. We select which movie to see based on the assessment of a film critic, we buy perfume after making an assessment of its fragrance, and we buy clothes based on an assessment of the extent to which they suit us. The criteria for these judgments are not always explicit and often vary from person to person, but in the course of a day we make many such judgments.

For teachers, however, assessment activities are more restricted. They are directly related to the school curriculum, to teaching and to what students learn. Such activities might be informal and take place in the classroom—for example, questions and answers, observations or judgments made about particular work samples. They might be more formal and include the marking of essays, teacher-devised tests or assessment of a portfolio of completed work. They might be very formal and include standardised tests, high-stakes examinations (e.g. the Higher School Certificate) or international surveys of student knowledge (e.g. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). Students are subject to a broad range of assessment activities, and it will be useful at this point to review some of the technical terminology associated with assessment and reporting. This terminology is summarised in Table 1.1.

Blackmore (1988, p. 5) has differentiated between the educational objectives of assessment and the instrumental objectives. The educational aspects of assessment are concerned with gathering information on student progress in such a way that it can be used by teachers (and parents) to help students improve their learning. This might involve providing feedback to students so they can better understand what they need to do to improve their performance. The instrumental aspects of assessment are related to its 'sifting and sorting' function. For example, one of the outcomes of 'high-stakes assessment' is to exclude some people from tertiary education. Within schools, the results of a teacher-made test might be to group students into different ability classes. It is the instrumental aspects of assessment that have drawn the most criticism from educators (Broadfoot 1979), but there is little sign that these instrumental purposes have been ameliorated over time. What this alerts us to is the fact that assessment takes place within, and is often constructed by, broader social, political, and economic purposes and contexts.

Broadfoot (1981, p. 202), for example, has made the point that 'Assessment procedures are the vehicle whereby the dominant rationality of the corporate capitalist societies . . . is translated into the structures and process of schooling'. She is supported in her views by populist writers such

TABLE 1.1 *Technical terms relating to assessment*

Norm-referenced assessment	Seeks to compare the performance of students by rank-ordering the achievement of individual students. This can also involve comparing the achievement of groups with similar or different characteristics (e.g. in terms of age, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic status).
Criterion-referenced assessment	Shows how an individual student's performance compares with some predefined criterion or goal. Its function is to demonstrate what students know and are able to do; it does not seek to compare students.
Standards-based assessment	Uses criterion-referencing to show a student's performance in relation to expected levels of achievement at a specific grade level or stage of schooling.
Standardised test	A customised test developed for use with large samples of students, usually involving successive administrations over time. The results of different samples can be compared with the original statistical norms. Such tests are always administered and interpreted in a uniform way, and they can be either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced.
Traditional assessment	Involves the use of paper-and-pencil tests that ask students to choose responses from alternative answers (e.g. multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, fill-in-the blanks, matching exercises).
Alternative assessment	Asks students to create a response or a product to demonstrate level of achievement (e.g. essay, painting, oral presentation, open-ended question, group projects).
Performance-based assessment	An alternative form of assessment that requires the direct observation of students as they engage in tasks and activities (e.g. role-play, debate, playing a musical instrument, contributing to group work, dramatic performance).
Authentic assessment	An alternative form of assessment that engages students in 'real world' tasks, such as those likely to take place as part of daily living (as opposed to decontextualised paper-and-pencil tasks), requiring the application of specific knowledge and skills.

Portfolio assessment	An alternative form of assessment based on a collection of student work samples or products collected over time to demonstrate progress in learning. For such assessment, the purposes need to be clearly stated, the criteria for including work samples need to be articulated, and the criteria or standards for judging performance need to be agreed.
Formative assessment	Provides feedback to students about the progress they are making in learning new concepts, skills or attitudes. It can take place during the teaching learning process or as structured feedback on work samples submitted by students. Such feedback can assist students to improve their learning and can also help teachers to develop new and more effective ways of teaching.
Summative assessment	Takes place at the end of a unit of work, a subject or a course, and indicates the extent to which expected learning outcomes have been achieved.
Reliability	The reliability of assessment refers to its consistency and stability. The assessment result should be the same irrespective of when, where and how the assessment was taken, who marked it and when it was marked. The reliability of assessment can be enhanced when possible sources of error are minimised. Multiple assessment tasks, agreed assessment criteria, and the use of moderation procedures all help to ensure that assessment is consistent and therefore reliable.
Validity	The extent to which an assessment task accurately reflects the knowledge, skills and values being assessed. Tasks linked to curriculum objectives and outcome statements should have a high degree of validity. Such tasks, however, must also be fair to all students so that the content of the task does not favour one group of students over another.

as Holt (1969) and by academic neo-Marxist writers such as Bowles and Gintis (1976). Yet other writers, such as Murphy and Torrance (1990), and indeed Broadfoot herself (Black and Broadfoot 1982), have sought a middle ground between recognising the function of instrumental approaches to assessment and seeking to support teachers in their key educational role in relation

to assessment. But the broader contexts of assessment cannot be forgotten and will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter. These contexts will provide a background against which to consider the more detailed chapters on assessment practices and strategies.

The remaining sections will consider assessment in relation to:

- the outcomes of schooling
- economic contexts
- equity and social contexts
- accountability
- personal fulfilment and satisfaction.

The outcomes of schooling

Everyone has a stake in the outcomes of schooling: students, parents, business and industry, governments and society. As a whole and individually, all of these groups feel the need to be aware of the progress that is being made in students' learning. Assessment is the means by which that learning can be monitored and improved, and reporting is the means by which stakeholders can be made aware of the progress that is being made. But why is there so much interest in the outcomes of schooling? Different groups have different answers to this question.

For *individual students*, what they learn during the schooling process will set them on their way for the future. It will not determine their future exclusively, as the education and training system is now so constructed that there are multiple entry points. Yet there is now no doubt that post-school qualifications of some kind will be essential for young people if they are to have a satisfying and rewarding life. It is the school experience that provides the foundations for lifelong learning that will characterise society in the twenty-first century.

Parents take a natural interest in the progress being made by their children. They entrust their children to schools and teachers for the most formative years of their children's lives. They need to be informed on a regular basis how their children are progressing in the different areas of the school curriculum. Parents always want what is best for their children, and their influence on the learning process cannot be underestimated. Parents can be powerful supports for teachers in helping children to reach their potential.

The *owners of business and industry* take an unashamed interest in the extent to which young people leaving school can contribute directly to their economic activities. They are concerned with knowledge and skills that can be applied immediately to specific work requirements. Increasingly, business and industry have come to rely on a skilled workforce.

Governments have responsibilities towards all members of society, and it is natural that they should take an interest in what students are learning as a result of their school experiences. One reason is that expenditure on education represents a sizeable proportion of current-day budgets, so it is not unreasonable for governments to want to monitor that expenditure. Another reason is that governments have responsibilities for the social and economic life of a nation, and the outcomes of schooling need to feed productively into those spheres.

Society as a whole takes an interest in the outcomes of schooling because young people are the citizens of the future. Society has constructed values around such things as democracy, the rule of law, particular forms of cultural expression, citizens' rights and responsibilities, the dignity of all human beings and the celebration of difference. These values can be at risk if young people leaving school are not aware of them. The continuation of our political and social systems, and

indeed civil society itself, is dependent on an informed and active citizenry. For society as a whole, this is one of the most significant outcomes of schooling.

It is this backdrop that confronts teachers when it comes to assessment and reporting. The main features of these stakeholder interests are summarised in Table 1.2.

It should be clear from Table 1.2 that teachers may be confronted with a difficult task, as the stakeholder interests depicted are not always easily reconcilable. This may also help to explain why there are often criticisms of schools: different stakeholders have different expectations. In addition, taking Blackmore's (1988) distinction between 'educational' and 'instrumental' purposes of assessment, it seems that external stakeholders are overwhelmingly instrumental in their approach to assessment. Teachers, it appears, stand in a special relationship to assessment. In one sense they might be seen as the guardians of the educational function of assessment. This guardianship has the potential to bring them into conflict with external stakeholders. Nevertheless, they too can use assessment for instrumental purposes—for example, in determining ability groups for subject selection. The main point here is that assessment provides the means by which the outcomes of schooling can be monitored by different groups. Thus, assessment and the way assessment results are reported cannot help but be matters of public interest and concern.

Concern with the outcomes of schooling is deeply embedded in the social, economic and political contexts of the modern nation. The following sections will explore these contexts in some detail.

Economic contexts

There is little doubt that, in the twenty-first century, the concerns of the economy remain dominant in the community's thinking. Despite the apparent success of the Australian economy, the slightest movement in exchange rates or the current account deficit attracts media attention.

TABLE 1.2 *Stakeholder interests in the outcomes of schooling*

Stakeholder	Interest
Students	Life chances that are personally fulfilling and rewarding.
Parents	Success in all spheres of life and activity.
Business	Specific knowledge and skills to ensure the growth and development of the business and industry.
Government	Efficient and effective use of funds so as to achieve broad social and economic objectives.
Society	The development of future citizens who will recognise the ongoing need for values that support the basic institutions on which society has been built.

Terms such as 'international competitiveness' still fall easily from the lips of Australian politicians, as they do with politicians throughout the world. Yet, this new century brings different concerns from the earlier ones. Pusey (1991) quite rightly pointed to the influence of economic rationalism on government policy during the 1980s, and to the downsizing of government departments and interests that took place as a result. Similar downsizing took place in the private sector as business sought to become 'lean and mean', as though efficiency in itself was a creator of the new income streams on which business depended. This approach to economic management is now as outdated as the old computers that were in use at the time.

Tapscott (1996) has pointed to the fundamental changes that have taken place in the economy in a short period of time. These changes have been brought about by two significant influences: first, a general commitment to free trade on the part of most governments throughout the world, with the result that trade barriers have significantly lessened in the past two decades; and second, the so-called digital revolution, which is moving at such a pace that even if there were significant trade barriers in place they would be quickly overcome by Internet transactions, e-commerce and the rapidity of modern telecommunications. Governments are now faced with the development of a 'knowledge economy' that, in Tapscott's terms, is 'based on the application of human know-how to everything we produce and how we produce it' (p. 7). The 'knowledge economy' depends on smart people using their intellectual capital to solve problems, form new ways of doing things, and create new products for an increasingly consumer-oriented society.

So, what does this have to do with assessment and reporting? The most immediate relationship between the emergence of a 'knowledge economy' and assessment and reporting is that the latter are the means by which society is able to monitor the development of its skills and knowledge base. Assessment and reporting are able to inform society about the progress young people are making in school. Assessment provides some measure of that progress, and reporting makes that measure publicly available and capable of being contested. In an age where national economic development is integrally linked to an educated population, assessment and reporting provide indicators of how capable young people are of making a contribution to national growth and development. These are not the only purposes of assessment and reporting, as will be shown later. But, in terms of the economy, this is the function they are able to perform. Such a function may well explain why governments internationally have taken an unprecedented interest in assessment issues in recent times (Brady and Kennedy 2007).

While notions of the 'knowledge economy' and 'information revolution' are relatively recent, the theoretical underpinnings that relate them to school education are not. Whether it is the industrial economy or the knowledge economy, the function of schools in producing skilled labour for the first and knowledge workers who can value-add for the second is similar. A crucial function for schools has always been to provide the economy with workers and professionals who can contribute productively to economic activity. The requirements of those workers may well be different in a 'knowledge economy', and a 'knowledge economy' may well require generally higher levels of aggregate skills, but the general need remains. Assessment and reporting are the mechanisms that indicate how well schools are performing this particular function.

In theoretical terms, this function has been underpinned by human capital theory. This theory had its roots in post-Second World War thinking about the factors that influence economic development. It was postulated that investment in education would have a rate of return such that, as the aggregate level of skills in a society grew, so would economic activity and development. The theory has a certain face validity, and there have been many empirical studies that have tried to

demonstrate the relationship. Even though the empirical support for the theory is contested, policy makers in Australia have not been reluctant to express their belief in education's capacity to contribute to economic growth and development. Thus when the Australian Labor Party announced its education policy in the lead-up to the 2007 election it was entitled, 'The Australian Economy Needs an Education Revolution' (Australian Labor Party 2007). However, investment in education on the part of government is a two-edged sword: it brings more funds, but also greater scrutiny. It is for this reason that we now see standardised testing regimes across each state and territory. These allow students' learning progress to be monitored on a regular basis and for reports to be made to students, their parents and the community. This is the price to be paid for further investment in schools and education.

Equity and social contexts

Governments of all persuasions have focused their attention on economic issues in recent times, and this is understandable given the vagaries of economic theory and economic development. Yet, schools are more than instruments of economic development: they also serve significant social purposes. These purposes were recognised in *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*:

3. Schooling should be socially just, so that:
 - 3.1 students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination
 - 3.2 the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve
 - 3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling
 - 3.4 all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society
 - 3.5 all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity. (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 1999)

From at least one perspective, the new economic imperatives have also highlighted the significance of the social role of schools:

Given the changing role of the State in relation to economic development, does this necessarily imply significant changes to the social role of schools? Is there any reason to suggest that all of the traditional social roles of schools need to be abandoned in light of new economic imperatives for governments? Might it not be argued that given the fast pace of economic change and development, the social role of schools will be even more important for young people seeking to locate themselves in a fast moving global society? (Kennedy 1999, p. 11)

The argument advanced by Kennedy (1999) is that schools need to act as 'social anchors', providing young people with, among other things, a set of agreed and common values that will provide certainty in a fast-changing world. Assessment plays a fundamental role in relation to such social purposes. Because of the instrumental functions referred to earlier, assessment

practices have the potential to advantage some and disadvantage others. It is important, therefore, that assessment practices operate equitably for all individuals and groups. Otherwise, they will contribute to the general uncertainty that characterises our times and may lead to inequities in the educational system.

That there is a potential for assessment to operate inequitably is well documented in the literature. Berends and Koretz (1996) have reported that the National Assessment of Educational Progress in the United States seriously undervalued social context variables and hence underestimated the achievements of minority students. Here in Australia, it has become recognised that certain kinds of testing (e.g. multiple-choice tests) tend to favour boys over girls. It also appears that the kind of high-stakes testing used to select students for university entrance favours students from high socioeconomic areas over those from low socioeconomic areas. Inequities can also be seen when students whose first language is not English are required to take tests in English. Such students are at a disadvantage before they even start the test. These are not easy issues to address, but they alert us to the social issues that can have an impact on assessment practice.

Assessment can also point to inequities. The National School English Literacy Survey conducted in 1996 showed very poor results for Indigenous students. It also showed that almost 29 per cent of the Indigenous sample came from homes where English was not always spoken, and that records of school attendance were very poor for many students in the sample (Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1997). Such results do not in any way begin to provide a solution: that is not the function of assessment. But they do highlight a problem that urgently needs to be addressed. What is more, these particular results make explicit what many teachers have known for a long time.

What seems to be well accepted now is that assessment operates differentially in relation to different social groups. Thus the question teachers need to ask is whether the results they are getting based on different kinds of assessment practices are a true indicator of a student's learning, or whether they might be caused by some other factor such as race, gender, ethnicity or level of poverty. That is to say, assessment outcomes need to be subjected to a reality check. They do not 'speak for themselves' and they rarely speak unambiguously.

Assessment therefore has the potential to influence the social contexts of students in different ways. It can actually exacerbate social problems if assessment outcomes are interpreted outside of the social contexts they inevitably influence. Thus, assessment has to be used with care and in such a way that unintended social outcomes are not created. On the other hand, assessment can alert us to potential social problems and inequities and provide the grounds on which specific action can be taken.

Accountability

There is little doubt that accountability has become one of the catchcries of our times. In educational circles, assessment has become one of the chief means by which governments have engaged in what can loosely be called 'processes of accountability'. Processes of accountability are related to student learning (what students know and are able to do), the expenditure of public funds, and aligning educational outcomes with the perceived needs of society and the economy. Teachers play a central role in accountability processes and are often held to be accountable for the broad outcomes of schooling. Thus, some understanding of how accountability mechanisms are developed and how they operate is important.

The basic skills testing that now operates in every Australian state and territory is a good example of assessment used for accountability purposes. While such testing varies in format from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, the purposes are similar. It provides for education systems (and their political masters) a measure of the 'health' of the system, even though results to date have not been publicly released. Education systems can pinpoint social groups, schools and regions that are not meeting acceptable levels in basic skills, and appropriate action can then be taken. Such measures are also fed back directly to parents so that they too can get some idea of how their children are performing in relation to accepted standards of performance. Teachers are able to gain information about their classes, and about individuals within their classes. That the measures are 'objective', that they have been applied throughout a particular jurisdiction and that they are made available to key stakeholders, makes the process explicit and transparent.

It is fortunate that Australian education authorities have not gone as far as their counterparts in the United States and the United Kingdom, where such results are often published in the local newspapers. This additional type of 'media accountability' brings schools into the public gaze in an unfortunate way, and all sorts of conclusions are drawn about assessment outcomes. In particular, schools are often ranked according to the test scores of their students without regard for the social composition of the schools, their resource levels, or the broader cultural context in which they are operating. Such accountability is of an extreme kind, reflecting the lack of confidence that many communities have in their schools and teachers. It also reflects an ignorance about the purpose and function of assessment.

Education system authorities have become increasingly concerned with developing and refining accountability mechanisms. In the government sector these authorities are answerable to the broader processes of government, especially when it comes to securing funds to finance educational expenditure. Often, they are dealing with Treasuries and Departments of Finance that recognise only one thing—the rate of return on expenditure. Student learning outcome measures can often be used to demonstrate that the education system is being monitored and that incremental gains are being made. Such reasons may not hold much educational sway, but in a tense environment concerned with resource allocation they may swing an argument. What is more, taxpayers are probably supportive of any mechanisms that seek to enhance the responsible allocation of their resources.

Another perspective on accountability can be seen in the effort that was made in Australia to develop national curriculum statements and profiles (Kennedy 1995). The impetus for this move was to obtain some kind of national consistency in the school curriculum, an issue that has been revived by the current Commonwealth government. The movement from the development of national curriculum statements (an outline of the content of the curriculum) to national curriculum profiles (what students should know and be able to do at different levels of schooling) raised the accountability dimension of the exercise. Schools and teachers were being tied into learning outcomes that were designed to be applied across the country. That is to say, teachers were to be held accountable for producing learning outcomes in students that were consistent with the nationally developed profiles. Much has happened since that time, and there have been reviews and evaluations of the profiles at state and territory level. Yet in most jurisdictions the accountability principle is still in place, with system-level expectations concerning student learning outcomes. In one jurisdiction, the curriculum framework is called the 'South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework'. This form of outcomes-based education is inextricably tied to accountability; the extreme emphasis on

and teachers are expected to work towards them. The specification of learning outcome statements is one way to hold both teachers and schools accountable for student learning outcomes.

Linn (1998, p. 2) has pointed out that, from a policy maker's perspective, assessment has a number of advantages as an accountability tool. It is relatively inexpensive (compared with, for example, raising teachers' salaries in order to attract high-quality graduates to the profession), it can be externally mandated and rapidly implemented, and results can be made highly visible. Yet the warning from Madaus, Raczek and Clarke (1997, p. 22), that 'the idea of any testing technique—be it new test design or a national test or system—can reform our schools and restore our nation's competitiveness is the height of technological arrogance and conceals many of the negative possibilities of such a move under the guise of a seemingly neat technological fix', is an important reminder about the limits of assessment and the politics of school reform.

Personal fulfilment and satisfaction

Older, progressive notions of education saw its function primarily in terms of nurturing and developing individuals to their full capacity and making use of their complete range of talents. Of course such views, when they were originally developed in the eighteenth century, applied to an elite group that was privileged enough to have access to education. Today, with mass education the norm, the emphasis on personal fulfilment as an outcome of education does not seem to rank very highly. Yet for individual students, and indeed their parents, the personal dimension of education cannot be ignored.

Smith and Goodwin (1997) catch some of this personal dimension when they refer to the need for assessment to be responsive to the needs of individual students. Perhaps more importantly, they see children as individuals whom they have to get to know on a daily basis. They recognise that the child they know one day may be different the next. In this context, assessment means being ever alert to where children are, how they are responding to lessons and activities, and how they are or are not progressing. There is nothing scientific about this kind of assessment: it is based on developing a relationship with students, knowing who they are, and being interested in who they are to become. Student-centred assessment involves being in 'constant conversation with the children about the sense they are making of their work, what it is they are learning and doing' (Smith and Goodwin 1997, p. 103).

Student-centred assessment has its theoretical origins in progressivist notions of education popularised by philosophers such as John Dewey. Today, such views have their advocates among constructivist educators—people who believe that children are able to construct their own knowledge in meaningful ways. According to this view, children make meaning of the world around them and they do so in deliberate and purposeful ways. This meaning-making process may not always be consistent with the requirements of nationally developed curriculum statements and profiles, but it is personal and responsive to the external environment. It is easy to see why advocates of student-centred assessment find recent developments in curriculum and assessment practice difficult to accept. The assumption that all children should reach a particular level of learning at the same time is quite repugnant to views that highlight individual growth and development. But, in the real world, teachers have to live with the external constraints imposed by education systems while pursuing their own personal views and practices. The resulting tension

Another perspective on the importance of the personal dimension to assessment comes from Genishi (1997), who focused on the challenge of the post-modern world. At its heart, post-modernism is about the reification of the individual rather than the group, the personal story rather than the grand narrative, the startlingly new rather than the taken-for-granted, the powerless rather than the powerful, and liberation from rather than adherence to tradition. Thus, Genishi draws on psychologists such as Bruner (1996) and Kelly (1991) to highlight the importance of the personal construction of meaning by children. In this context, assessment has to deal with individual students. And it also has to do with individual teachers, as it cannot be assumed, from a post-modern perspective, that teachers will perceive children in identical ways. Genishi asserts that 'a post-modern frame must accommodate the fundamental shift in ways of looking at the person—both the person who is the assessor and who is the assessed. Both are capable of actively constructing their own theories of the world and their unique interpretations of situations' (1997, p. 46). Neither standardised tests nor national curriculum profiles can be accommodated within this frame of reference. Rather, assessment becomes an entirely personal transaction between teacher and students.

Such approaches to assessment, of course, place considerable demands on teachers. Large class sizes, competing demands for time within the classroom, and the constant external calls for accountability and standards mean that teachers will always feel pulled in multiple directions. It will probably continue to be the case that teachers will be called on to submit their students to all kinds of external assessment regimens (e.g. basic skills testing, standardised literacy and numeracy tests, tests of civic knowledge), as well as carrying out personalised assessments on a day-to-day basis. Perhaps the most significant challenge for teachers is not to let one form of assessment replace the other: different forms of assessment will need to exist side by side to meet the many demands made of schools, teachers and students.

Summary

- There are broad social, political and economic contexts that help to shape assessment reporting practices in schools. This is a reflection of the fact that everyone in the community has a stake in the outcomes of schooling: politicians, businesspeople, social activists and, not least, students and parents.
- Theoretical perspectives such as progressivism, post-modernism and human capital theory help to elucidate these contexts. Some theoretical perspective usually drives stakeholders' views of assessment and reporting.
- Teachers need to develop their own response to assessment and reporting issues within the particular school context in which they find themselves. Such responses need to take into account the external pressures confronting schools.
- The tension between personal and professional responses to public demands for performance and accountability is a feature of professional life for teachers.

Questions and exercises

1. Why is there so much interest on the part of the community in the outcomes of schooling? Is it reasonable?
2. Why are assessment and reporting of such interest in relation to the new economy? Were they any less important to the old economy?

3. What are the equity issues related to assessment and reporting?
4. Are assessment and reporting reliable accountability mechanisms?
5. How can you reconcile your own personal views of assessment and reporting with the views in the external environment?

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